

School & Court Linkages

A Periodic Newsletter of the Superintendents - Judges Liaison Committee

Issue 4, June 2001

This newsletter summarizes recent discussions of the Superintendents -Judges Liaison Committee. The Committee, created in 1995, is designed to establish a permanent liaison that will maintain open lines of communication between superintendents and judges and address issues of mutual concern.

The committee consists of eight school division superintendents and eight juvenile and domestic relations court judges, one from each of the superintendents' regions. The Virginia Association of School Superintendents appointed the superintendents. Chief Justice Harry L. Carrico invited the judges to participate.

Meetings are held twice each year. The superintendent and judge from each region also host regional meetings of superintendents and judges on a periodic basis. The Virginia Department of Education provides grant funds to support these meetings.

Prior newsletter topics include truancy reduction, search and seizure, and suicide prevention, school re-enrollment plan, special education programs in regional or local jails. Copies are available upon request.

Current membership:

Dr. Jo Lynne DeMary
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mr. Robert N. Baldwin
Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia

Region I

Dr. M. LaVerne Daniels
Surry County Public Schools

The Honorable Samuel E. Campbell
Hopewell Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Region II

Dr. Steven R. Staples
York County Public Schools

The Honorable William R. Moore, Jr.
Isle of Wight Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Region III

Mr. Randolph Latimore, Sr.
Lancaster County Public Schools

The Honorable Maston Davis
Richmond County Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court

Region IV

Mrs. Pam McInnis
Superintendent
Warren County Schools

The Honorable Jane B. Delbridge
Fairfax Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Region V

Dr. T. Lowell Lemons
Waynesboro City Public Schools

The Honorable Kenneth W. Farrar
Lynchburg Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court

Region VI

Dr. Linda Weber
Roanoke County Public Schools

The Honorable Joseph P. Bounds
Roanoke Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Region VII

Dr. Alan T. Lee
Washington County Public Schools

The Honorable J. Wesley McClintock, III
Tazewell County Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

Region VIII

Dr. Margaret Blackmon
Prince Edward County Public Schools

The Honorable Michael M. Rand
Halifax Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court

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Spotlight: *Sharing and Dissemination of Juvenile Delinquency Information Between Juvenile Courts and Schools*

Robert E. Shepherd, Jr., Professor of Law at the University of Richmond Law Schools, addressed the committee. This presentation was in response to the Virginia Commission on Youth's recent report on School Discipline. The Commission referred issues regarding information contained in reports sent to schools by courts and law enforcement agencies to the Liaison Committee. Professor Shepherd's presentation noted the following:

- The Intake Officer is to notify the superintendent as soon as practical after the filing of a petition alleging certain offenses.
 - The Superintendent is to inform the Intake Officer if the juvenile is not enrolled in the division.
 - The Superintendent may disclose the fact that a petition has been filed and nature of the offense to the principal if necessary to "ensure the physical safety of the juvenile, other students or school personnel."
 - The Principal may, to ensure physical safety or appropriate educational placement or services, disseminate the information to students or other school personnel in direct contact with the student only after the juvenile has been taken into custody.
- The Juvenile or Circuit Court Clerk is to disclose to the superintendent in certain cases where the juvenile is found guilty of delinquency or of a crime. The Clerk of the Court is to give written notice within 15 days of the disposition if there is no notice of appeal.
- Local law enforcement authorities may report to a principal or his designee certain offenses on school property, school buses, or at school-sponsored events. The principal shall report the incidents to the superintendent.

- The Chief of Police or Sheriff may disclose to the principal that a juvenile is a suspect in or has been charged with certain offenses.

The Committee identified certain gaps in information provided to or by school

personnel. As a result, the Supreme Court of Virginia and the Department of Education will further study this issue and report back to the Liaison Committee at a future meeting.

Spotlight: *Virginia's Drug Court Programs*

Dr. Donna Boone of the Office of the Executive Secretary, Supreme Court of Virginia presented information about the current status of Virginia's drug court programs. Virginia has twelve operational drug court programs in Circuit, General District and Juvenile Courts. Twelve more jurisdictions were awarded federal funding to attend drug court planning workshops in fiscal year 2001. Drug court programs combine (1) strict and frequent supervision by probation staff; (2) intensive drug treatment by clinicians; and (3) close judicial monitoring by the court. There are four basic models of drug court programs in the Commonwealth: 1) adult felony drug court programs focused on adult addicts; 2) juvenile drug court programs aimed at juvenile offenders with substance abuse problems; 3) adult misdemeanor drug courts that address misdemeanor drug offenders and DUI offenders; and 4) family drug court programs that target parents whose addictions have led to neglect and/or abuse of their children. It is particularly important for school systems to support the efforts of juvenile drug courts. The federal Drug Court Program Office requires that a school representative be a member of juvenile drug court teams.

Drug court programs have higher retention rates in treatment and lower crime and drug use rates following program completion. Nationwide, recidivism rates of drug court graduates are less than half the rates of those not graduating from a drug court program. Only 3.2% of those graduating from the Roanoke drug court were subsequently convicted of another felony

offense. This compares with a 50% recidivism rate for Virginia's convicted drug offenders who were given alternate sentences such as probation or incarceration. Drug courts also save taxpayer money. The cost of drug court participation is approximately \$4,000 per year per participant compared with over \$22,000 to incarcerate an adult drug offender in Virginia's prisons.

The Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services Research Department studied Virginia offenders in 1997, finding that 32% of all convicted felons are drug offenders. Half (50%) of all convicted felons had evidence of prior drug abuse and 31% had alcohol abuse in their background. Between 1990 and 1997, drug arrests rose 66% in Virginia (17,606 to 29,302). Over a thousand Virginia babies born in 1998 had traces of illegal substances in their bodies. Communities are burdened with foster care costs for countless children whose parents are incapacitated by addiction.

Drug courts bring many community elements into active involvement in the addict's recovery process. The cooperation of court, schools, probation, and treatment professionals closes gaps in program supervision that were once exploited by addicts. Drug court teams accept responsibility for treatment program effectiveness. That responsibility and accountability is passed on to the drug offender with firm expectations that addicts commit to recovery in order to break their addiction-crime cycle. For further information about drug court programs, contact Dr. Donna L. Boone at the Office of the Executive Secretary (804) 786-3321.